



Columbia Opportunities, Inc. (COI) is a private, not-for-profit Community Action Agency with a mission to help solve poverty related problems in our community. Our goal is to enable families to attain the skills, knowledge, and opportunities they need to become self-reliant.

In the last year, COI offered training, education, counseling, housing services, healthcare, advocacy, emergency assistance and support to over 1300 local families. These programs and activities all have a measurable impact on the causes and conditions of poverty in our community.

The **Community Services Program** offers emergency interventions for food and shelter needs, problem solving for income and family issues and advocacy to insure that individuals and families have access to all available and necessary services. COI offers financial assistance to those in need in partnership with the Columbia County Department of Social Services, Berkshire Taconic Foundation Neighbor-to-Neighbor Fund, the Hudson River Bank & Trust Foundation , HeartShare NY .

- 552 households received help with their energy bills, including 232 with a heating emergency
- 254 different families with 765 individual members received emergency food
- 21 families received emergency assistance with transportation needs
- 20 families received emergency housing assistance
- 16 families received emergency assistance with clothing related needs
- 1 individual who had been chronically homeless continued to live in safe and affordable housing

Head Start is an early childhood education and development program designed to meet the school readiness needs of preschool age children and their families. These comprehensive services are provided in home based and classroom settings throughout Columbia County.

- 154 three & four year old children enrolled in Head Start to develop school readiness skills
- 82 children were developmentally ready to enter Kindergarten in September
- 154 children obtained age appropriate immunizations, medical, and dental care
- 31,052 nutritious meals and snacks were served to enrolled children
- 56 Head Start parents donated over 1547 hours of service in support of Head Start

The **Housing Choice Voucher Program** provides ongoing help with monthly rent payments and annual housing inspections to families throughout Columbia County.

- \$1,068,449 in rental subsidies was paid to area landlords on behalf 131 senior or disabled households and 51 families with children

The **Hudson Family Literacy Program**, in partnership with the Hudson City School District, supports and guides adult, adolescent, and child learners in meeting their educational and vocational goals while helping to develop the home and community as a learning environment for everyone.

- 15 adults and 16 teens obtained skills and competencies required for employment
- 11 adults showed measurable improvement in their English language skills
- 19 at risk teens remained in school
- 21 preschool age children developed school readiness skills
- 22 school age children and 17 teens increased their academic and social skills for school success

The **Volunteer Income Tax Assistance Program (VITA)** offers free tax preparation and electronic filing services by trained staff and community volunteers as well as access to a free and trustworthy on-line tax preparation program called “**MyFreeTaxes**”.

- 2 community volunteers donated over 100 hours of service preparing tax returns
- 227 households received nearly \$411,885 in federal & state income tax credits
- 571 customers received state and federal refunds totaling \$759,012

The **Weatherization Program** provides energy audits to homeowners and renters in order to find the best way to make their homes more energy efficient. Energy conservation measures such as refrigerator replacements, furnace repair or replacement, insulation and air sealing are installed to make homes safe, comfortable and less expensive to heat.

- 95 housing units were improved through 5 different energy conservation, health, and safety initiatives

Community Partnerships

COI maintains partnerships with nearly 200 organizations to achieve family and community outcomes. The Columbia Greene Housing Coalition and Continuum of Care Program is a significant community collaboration that was spearheaded by Columbia Opportunities, Inc. in 2002. This initiative has been responsible for the creation of 49 permanent supportive housing opportunities for people who had been homeless.

Human & Financial Resources

\$312,401 of Community Services Block Grant Funds were used to leverage nearly \$4 million to combat the causes and conditions of poverty in our community including: \$ 2,855,009 in federal funds, \$ 212,941 in NYS funds, \$ 88,738 in local funds and \$599,498 in private fees and donations.

- 51 full time & 9 part-time employees worked with the COI Board of Directors to plan, develop, and provide services to individuals and families in our community
- 84 volunteers provided over 1800 hours of service in support of Community Action
- 71 COI staff, volunteers & board members participated in over 2100 hours of training

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